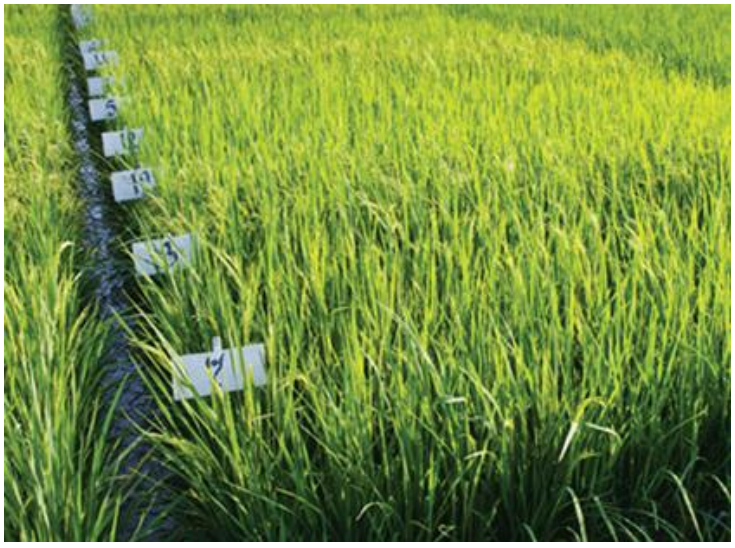
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BIB 2015: GM Myth vs Reality

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A farmer from Tamil Nadu, Mr VKV Ravichandran narrated his experience of growing BT cotton in his fields. According to him, there are a lot of myths surronding the BT cotton among farmers. In his presentation, he compared BT cotton vs hybrid cotton vs different varieties of cotton.

"I can say that the yield per acre for BT cotton is 1,300 kgs (approximate values only) where as hybrid has got us 1,150 kgs and variety cotton is 1,000 kg per acre. Picking cost for BT cotton was around Rs 9,100, Rs 8,050 for Hybrid and for Variety, it was Rs 7,000. Overall net sale value that I got from BT cotton is Rs 53,300, Rs 46,000 for Hybrid and Rs 40,000 for variety cotton."Â

He was speaking at the *Bangalore India BIO* addresing the session "Farmer's perspectives and public perception". He also said that some farmers say that we need to pay more price for BT cotton seeds. "Yes, maginally we pay a higher price for BT cotton seeds. But the fact is seed cost should not be seen in isolating other farmers. Other factors also must be considered," he added.

He appealed to his fellow farmers that in a single crop, namely cotton, with a single trait namely pest resistence we are able to dominate the cotton market in the world. If we are provided more number of crops with different traits, we can capture the world."

Echoing his thoughts, a farmer from Gulbarga, Mr Sudhindra Kulkarni, said that he has been growing BT cotton since 2004. "Earlier, due to high pest problems, we had discontinued growing cotton. After hearing about BT cotton, we started growing it in our fields. I am benefitting out of it and I have started a 'Council for Rural development and Agriculture Technology (CRAT) in Gulabarga and am encouraging other farmers to go for BT Cotton." He urged the government of Karnataka to introduce GM field trials for other crops.

In his address to the gathering, State Agriculture Minister Mr Krisha ByreGowda urged academia and scienticfic community to come up with a non-GM biotech crop procedure. "There is a lot of debate among people on GM crops. Some are for and some are against it. However, Agribiotech does not necessarily have to be only from a genetically modified method. People should consider non-GM biotech crops."

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Mr Ullas Karanth, director, Center for Wildlife studies, said that GM crops do not harm biodiversity. "Some say that GM will harm the biodiversity. However, I have to say that several other factors are threatning biodiversity. There is a element of risk in every discovery or innovation. We need to safeguard for such risks," he said.

Mr Narayanan Suresh, group editor for BioSpectrum India and Asia said that GM entry into the food crops are having issues because food is a sensitive issue. Today, GM has entered in to the lifestyle and pharma sectors. "The new union government has allowed confined field trials in four states. Yesterday, Karnataka minister for Science and Technology, IT, BT, Mr Patil said that Karnataka too will allow field trials of GM crops. It is a matter of time that this will be accepted by all."

He also refered to a recent consumer study in the uS where consumers are fine with and accept GM food as along as they are healthy and nutritious.